

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In the Claims.

Please substitute claim 17 with the following.

17. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein:

the hard etch mask comprises silicon dioxide; and

the first insulating layer comprises phosphorous doped silicon dioxide.

Please substitute claim 18 with the following.

18. (Amended) A method, comprising:

forming a hard mask comprising substantially undoped silicate glass over an insulating layer comprising doped silicon dioxide, the hard mask having openings over a contact hole location; and

forming a contact hole at the contact hole location through the insulating layer between conducting structures separated from one another by less than 0.4 microns and having sidewalls, without forming a protective liner over the conducting structures.